

# Movie Makers

November-December, 2001

Volume 11 No. 6

The American Motion Picture Society

**Sponsors of the oldest continuing Film/video Festival in the world.**

## *From the Secretary*

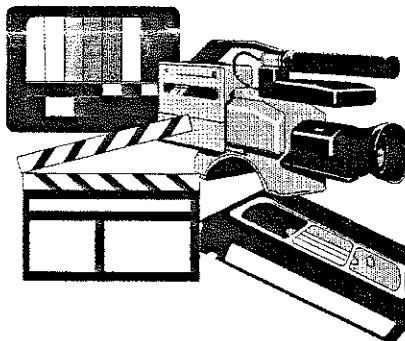
Roger Garretson

**T**he combined convention at Jackson Wyoming last month was an inspiring event, made even more so by being able to meet our editor, Matt Jenkins, in person.

I wish all of you could have had that opportunity. He made a very positive impression on all those in attendance with his sincerity, knowledge and personality. We are indeed honored to have him as our editor and on top of all that, our Festival Director. On behalf of all of us Matt, thank you for your fine efforts and dedication to AMPS.

There have been many fine articles written by a variety of authors regarding the judging of contests and there are still

as many opinions about judges as there are producers of videos to those contests. I am not going to try to compete with those authors or their comments. I will say though, that we owe them a



tremendous vote of gratitude for their selfless attitude and willingness to accept such a burden. It is only through their efforts that we are able to continue to have the excuse to get together and host such events as held in Jackson.

Matt mentioned something in

response to a comment that judges should only be obtained from the ranks of amateur videomakers. I am not going to try to quote him, but the idea that I got from his comments was that amateurs should not use their "amateur" status to produce inferior products, and I couldn't agree more. True, we don't have all the elaborate equipment and we have to do all the tasks that are shared by many many other people, such as gaffers, sound techies, etc., but, we do have the advantage of total control over our story, our editing, and all the other aspects of production. So, there is no excuse for the shoddy work that sometimes creeps in to our productions. Believe me, I include my own work in this observation.

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## From the Editor

I thought for a long time before I started writing this column. While I did have a wonderful time at the recent convention, I was dismayed at some of the responses to the judging comments from the recent AMPS competition. However, Roger Garretson basically said most of what I wanted to say in his "From the Secretary" article on the front page of this issue so I won't repeat it.

I will say a big thank you to Jean Frances for overseeing the convention and for the lovely thank you letter she sent me.

I also want to thank Howard Lockwood for the copy of my workshop he sent to me on videotape. There is a notice in the newsletter of how you may obtain your own copy.

And I also want to thank Joyce Axelrod for sending me the videotape copy of some of her productions. I look forward to sharing them with my students. I know her work will serve as an inspiration to my students.

Finally I want to thank Roger Garretson. He is an excellent Secretary/Treasurer for this organization and I am proud to be able to work with him.

Well, I finished my documentary on low-budget producers.

It is an odd length, 47 minutes long. So far, I have entered it into seven film festivals and have sent preview copies to four television stations. Now I did cut it down to 28:30 for the broadcast stations. I don't expect to hear anything until after the first of the year. If I could get an honorable mention and a few showings on TV, I will consider this piece a success.

It was a blast to produce and



edit. I edited from the end of July until the beginning of November. For me that is a long time. This particular piece was tough. It was hard to have a script as I wasn't sure what kind of "B-roll" I would have and what the interviewees were going to say. So this production was viewed by a few other sets of eyes, which I am thankful for. These people pointed out some glaring continuity errors. Of course at first I was "wounded" by the comments, but in the end I made the necessary changes and it is a much stronger production.

As always you may e-mail your comments to me at mattj@cameron.edu.

### Movie Makers

Dedicated to the interests of the Serious Motion Picture Maker.

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**George W. Cushman**  
Founder,  
1909-1996

Matt Jenkins, Editor

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# Judging in New Zealand

No 18 – May, 1994

*For a fresh viewpoint on motion picture judging, we present here the comments of a judge in New Zealand.*

By Sam Edwards

In judging this year's New Zealand Movie Federation's Competition there was clear evidence of much experience and tradition in handling film, and very little in the use of video as a narrative medium. What was also clear was that many entrants were seduced by the apparent ease of use of the video camera and simply did not put in the discipline required to construct an accurate narrative.

I use the term "narrative" in its broadest sense of linking a set of associated ideas, fiction or nonfiction, in a connected and coherent structure designed to take the viewer on a walk along the pathway of experience of the film, or video, director's choosing.

## Traditional negative form

I also acknowledge film which does not have traditional narrative form as its base, ex-

perimental and expressionistic film which explores a variety of formal uses of camera and sound and screen and which can provide exciting visual and aural experiences. The latter, however, was little in this festival.

There were many entries which appeared to be in post-production and should not have been entered.

Some of the following technical skills might apply:

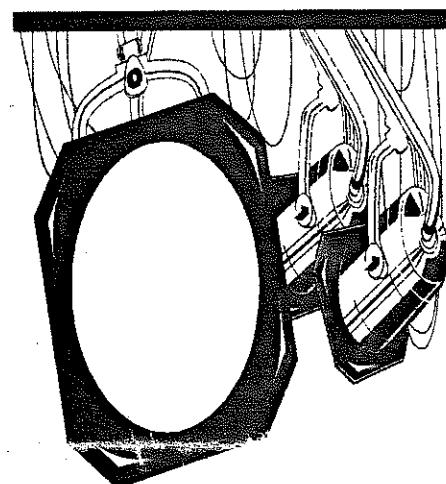
-use of a tripod unless deliberately not wanted,

- intentional framing normally set horizontally and used to select just that information the viewer is required to have,

- variation of shot as in the deliberate timing and inclusion of close-ups to provide a variety of visual interest and rhythm or the use of deliberate camera movement to follow an idea or develop a concept. This DOES NOT include the use of a zoom lens which has become the bane of the video maker. Camera movements should always be deliberate for a clear cinematic purpose, essential to the flow of the narrative, and video makers would be well advised to disconnect the zoom and set up for each shot if they want to master the filmic arts.

- vigorous editing to ensure there is adequate linking be-

tween the idea and the point of focus at the end of one shot and the beginning of the next, and that unnecessary material is removed. Many entries would have been much more powerful if the makers knew what they wanted to say and used only those shots necessary to say it.



- light has meaning. It is not there just to let us see an object, it is part of the process of revealing ideas. Natural light is fine provided the camera operator is aware of the effect of shadow and color and density when the color is collected in the frame. Additional light from simple reflectors or artificial light sources will often make the difference between something which is okay and something which is memorable.

We hope festivals will grow in strength particularly as people become familiar with the new technologies.

# News and Notes

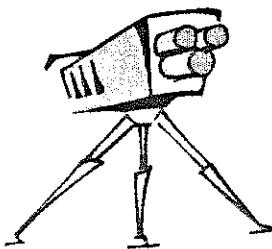
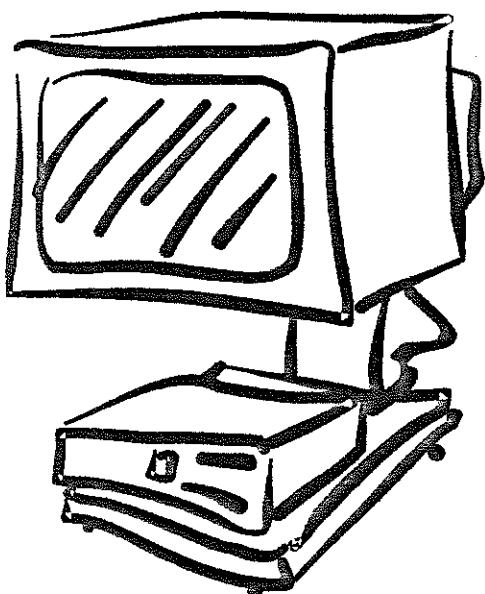
The American Motion Picture Society now has a new Internet home! The new AMPS web page can be found at [www.angelfire.com/movies/amps](http://www.angelfire.com/movies/amps). Be sure to check it out. One of the goals for this site is to list as many local film/video making clubs as possible. It will benefit local clubs by having their site listed, so new videomakers can get some ideas about where to go to learn more about video. If you would like to have your club listed on the site you are welcome to e-mail either Roger Garretson or Matt Jenkins. You are also welcome to send any comments.



Howard Lockwood is offering videotape copies of Matt Jenkins' workshop on how to produce winning videos which was presented at the recent convention. This tape is being provided as a service to others and is available for 8 dollars including postage. The money should be sent to Howard Lockwood at 11370 Ruggiero Ave, Lake View Terrace, California 91342-6733. Howard can be reached via e-mail at [how-lock@ix.netcom.com](mailto:how-lock@ix.netcom.com).

Macro Systems is organizing a service to offer the victims of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attack. They are offering a memorial video with up to 25 pictures put into the tape. It also includes music and titles. This offer is not limited to Casablanca owners. To sign up go to [www.casablanca.ty/videographer/dsp\\_entryform.cfm](http://www.casablanca.ty/videographer/dsp_entryform.cfm). There you will find the registration form.

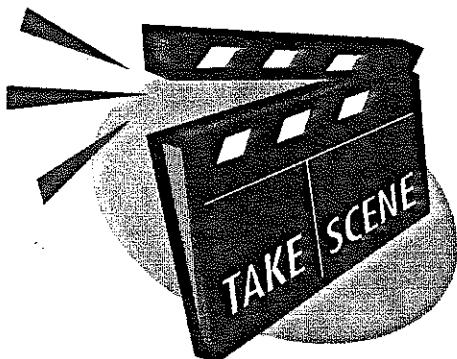
The AMPS winners reel from this year's competition is now available. Send \$10.00 to Roger Garretson in order to receive your copy.



# How to Produce a Winning Video

The following is an excerpt of remarks given by Matt Jenkins at the recent SAVAC/AMPS/Ten Best of The West Convention at Jackson Hole, Wyoming.

Hello I'm Matt Jenkins and I am the newsletter editor and a member of the American Motion Picture Society...I've been asked to talk about how to make an award winning video. And Honestly, I don't know. When I produce something



that I think is well done, it usually doesn't place. And, of course when I produce something that I consider to be weak, it seems to win. The more I learn the less I know. Those of you who read my articles in the "Movie Maker" newsletter know I am passionate about production and distribution of video productions regardless of cost or

format. To me a good production can just as easily be shot on VHS as on 70mm. I recently produced a documentary on low-budget movie producers. One of the people profiled, Pat Bishow of Amusement Films said that he would "draw movies" if he had to.

I think the American audience has been misled into thinking the only quality productions can come from mass-mediated-corporate produced efforts. That's why I like such entities as SAVAC and AMPS. You all should be disseminating your productions across the country on public access and the Internet.

**SUBJECT MATTER:** Subject matter does matter. Back in 1996 I shot a campy sci-fi alien flick. Here are some judge's comments: "Huh?" and "This movie might be fun for you and your friends, but it is hard to sit through for anyone else." Needless to say they didn't care for it much.

Now you can watch this movie on the Internet. I licensed it for 25 times what I paid to make. Which, by the way, makes my little picture statistically more financially successful than "Titanic." I recognize that money is not the reason why I produce programs. It also has been a requested production at a recent film festival. Why did one set of judges hate it and another like it? Subject matter.

Subject matter is all important. Or should I say treatment of subject matter is all important. The winner of the American International Film and Video Festival this year was a simple story that didn't have any dialogue in it. No flying boom shots or special effects. It is just a simple story, great music and sound effects and great acting. You should try and see it.

I know with my own work that I tend to rush through production. I should take more time. Ken Burns is producing a documentary on the effects of World War II on the home front. He sent a crew to Waterbury Connecticut to shoot for twenty days. And he wasn't sure if he was even going to include any of this footage in his final product! Hey, I work for a living and don't have that kind of luxury.

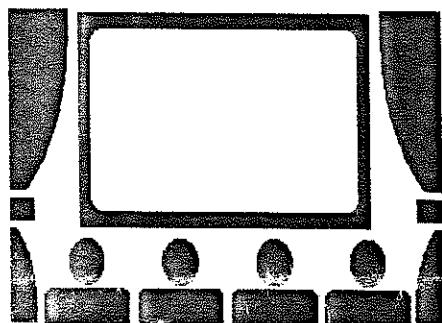
The point? Even though we lack in equipment and budget, we can still really take time and plan out our productions. I am a firm believer in the creative process taking place on paper. And whether you consider yourself to be an amateur, or a micro-cinema producer or big budget, your productions will always be better if you take time to plan things out before hand. A simple split page script or a storyboard will help immensely in preventing continuity errors and jump cuts.

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# Convention Review.

Matt Jenkins

**I**t was exciting to travel to Jackson Hole, Wyoming for this year's SAVAC/TEN BEST OF THE WEST/AMPS convention. I was finally able to put faces with



the names of people that I have corresponded with through e-mail.

While I did not arrive until Friday afternoon, I was treated to award winning videos and a KRON demonstration by Brenda Lantow. Though a long time AVID user, I was impressed by the simplicity of the KRON and its abilities (especially with the DVD burner.)

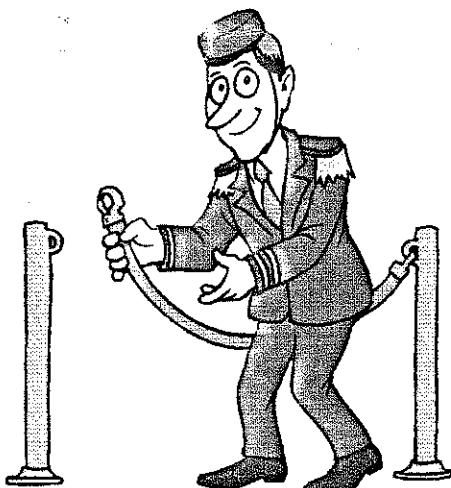
Saturday started with a panel discussion consisting of Malcolm Colditz, Joyce Axelrod, Brian Gubler, and Merna Smith. It was interesting to hear their comments on the types of productions they do. And the type of productions

ranged from wedding shoots to underwater videography.

I presented a workshop as well. Excerpted remarks can be found in this issue.

The most touching moment was at the banquet when SAVAC President Malcolm Colditz announced that the wonderful awards created by Wally Shaw were to be called "Wallys."

Jean Frances is to be commended on her dedication and hard work in making the convention a success. Her selection of a host hotel was terrific and I think the event was extremely well done.



It was great to "commune" with other people passionate about creating visual pieces and experience their work. I look forward to next year's convention in San Diego.

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A good treatment of a good story begins with writing. Keep it simple! You may have complex concepts but keep the wording simple. One way is with the 21 rule. Count each sentence as follows one syllable words count as 0, two syllable words count as one and three syllable words count as two and so on. Add up your sentences. If the count is more than 21, rewrite the sentence!

Even if you are going to shoot video on a trip and make a travelogue, be creative! Judges do get tired of seeing the map in the beginning, handheld shots of your vacation with a voice over. A little creativity goes a long way. What is creativity? A little imagination backed up with a lot of hard work. What you produce is a work of art as well as a technology and a business.

Titles can be produced different ways from simple rub on letters to computer print outs or using computer graphics to produce your titles.

What is good framing? It depends. If you are shooting in the style of French Newwave filmmakers then framing will be different than in a more "traditional" type of program.

Most camcorders have an external microphone input. It would be wise to get an external mic to use when you

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The term "amateur" as described in the definition included in the Festival entry form, is one who makes a video or movie without the use of paid personnel. A video made purely for the enjoyment of making the production, with no profit in mind. Heck, with those definitions, Stephen Spielberg could make a video on his own and submit it, right? Amateur is not a bad word. The only thing that makes it such, is poor production.

The main thing about judging that irks me, are the comments of those who don't win with their own production and then blame it on the judges. Maybe, just maybe, this may

be true sometimes, but often it is just because we didn't deserve to win in that particular contest. Hopefully, we can get all the judges of contests to give suggestions of how they thought the production could be improved. Unless you want to accept the responsibility of being Festival Director though, please think twice before you castigate the judges because your production didn't win. Hey, there is always next year.

One of the fantastic opportunities offered by video conventions is the chance to be inspired by the works of other video makers. The next convention involving AMPS, AMMA (formerly called SAVAC) and the Ten Best of

the West (TBW) will be held in San Diego next year between October 10-14. Mark it on your calendar right now, and plan on visiting sunny So. California. You will love the climate but you will LOVE the chance to meet and greet other fellow enthusiasts of this great hobby.

We also would like to welcome our new Board of Directors. Through their fine efforts, we will continue to grow and support you, the members of AMPS.

**www.angelfire.com/movies/amps**

## Upcoming Festivals

Close Date	Festival Name and address for forms	Open to:	Sub-ject	Format	Time Limit	Entry Fee	Award	Show Dates
1/6/02	IAC Int'l Film and Video Competition 2002 England <i>Forms are available via the internet &lt;www.theiac.org.uk&gt;</i> Or contact AMPS at <a href="mailto:rgetson@aol.com">rgretson@aol.com</a> , 30 Kanan Rd, Oak Park Ca 91377-1105	AB	Open	All formats in PAL or NTSC	No restriction	£5 entry/ 1min £9 entry/ up to 30 min	VU	Apr 21 2001
6/8/02	Cotswold Int'l Film & Video Festival 2002, c/o Lee Prescott, C.I.F.V.F, P.O BOX 64, Stonehouse, Gloucestershire, GL10 2YH, England, UK <i>Forms are available via the internet &lt;www.cotswoldfilmvideofest.co.uk&gt;</i>	A,B,E	Open	HJMNO PQ in Pal M-Ntsc	20 Min-B 30 min-A	\$11 A \$7 B \$16 E	TU	Sept 13/14, 2002
N/A Not Announced or not available								
A Amateur B College Student C Hi Sch or Grade School	D Independent E Professional F Restricted	G Open	H S 8 J 16mm K Other L 3/4" M VHS	N SVHS O 8mmvid P Hi 8 Q MiniDV	R Regional S exceptions T Cash U Trophies	V Certificates W Other Award X Approximate Y It varies	xx Members yy Non Member zz	

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shoot. Separating the mic from the camera will cut down on noise and give you more control of the audio that you record.

Quality lighting can be obtained through using simple reflectors to lighten up dark parts of the screen. Video doesn't handle contrast well.

Use of props can greatly aid in your production. Use what is around you in your production.

And try to tell the story visually.

Now you have finished the video what should you do with it? Enter it into festival's.

**APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP  
AMERICAN MOTION PICTURE SOCIETY**

### I Would like to Join the Society:

Dues USA: (includes - Movie Maker) \$ 10.00

Dues Canada: (includes. - Movie Maker) \$ 12.00

Dues-Foreign: (includes - Movie Maker) \$13.00

Enclosed \_\_\_\_\_

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

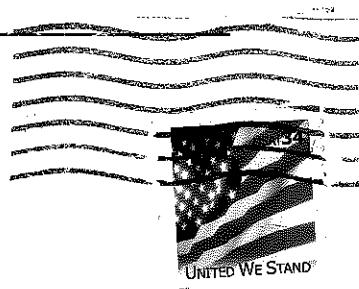
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